

## Message Text

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ORIGIN AF-06

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DRAFTED BY: AF/E:RSBARRETT:NB

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY ATHENS IMMEDIATE

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FOLLOWING REPEAT STATE 059790 SENT DUBLIN 24 MARCH.

QUOTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L

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FOLLOWING REPEAT STATE 059790 ACTION ASWAN ADDIS ABABA  
AMMAN ASMARA BEIRUT CAIRO JIDDA KHARTOUM DAR ES SALAAM  
LONDON LUSAKA MOGADISCIO NAIROBI PARIS ROME  
UNUN NEW YORK 17 MARCH.

QUOTE

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TOSEC 656

E.O. 11652:N/A

TAGS: PFOR, MASS, ET, US

SUBJECT: US RESPONSE TO ETHIOPIAN AMMUNITION REQUEST

1. DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN READ FOLLOWING ANNOUNCEMENT AT MARCH  
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17 PRESS BRIEFING:

2. THE US GOVERNMENT HAS INFORMED THE ETHIOPIAN PROVISIONAL MILITARY GOVERNMENT (PMG) THAT THE UNITED STATES IS PREPARED TO SELL TO ETHIOPIA FOR CASH UP TO DOLLARS7 MILLION WORTH OF AMMUNITION. THE US GOVERNMENT TOOK THIS DECISION AFTER DETAILED DISCUSSIONS WITH THE ETHIOPIAN AUTHORITIES CONCERNED BECAUSE THE UNITED STATES HAS BEEN VIRTUALLY THE SOLE SUPPLIER OF ETHIOPIA'S MILITARY NEEDS FOR OVER 20 YEARS; AND THE US DID NOT BELIEVE THAT IT COULD BE TOTALLY UNRESPONSIVE TO THE MOST RECENT REQUEST. AT THE SAME TIME THE US EXPRESSED TO THE EPMG ITS STRONG HOPE THAT THE TWO SIDES IN THE ERITREAN CONFLICT WOULD SOON ENTER INTO NEGOTIATIONS IN ORDER TO END THE FIGHTING IN ERITREA AND FIND AN ACCEPTABLE SOLUTION TO THAT PROBLEM. IN THIS RESPECT, THE US NOTES SOME ENCOURAGING INDICATIONS OF PROGRESS TOWARDS MEANINGFUL NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN THE ETHIOPIAN AUTHORITIES AND THE ELF/PLF.

WE ALSO WISH TO NOTE THAT THE US IS WORKING ON A PARALLEL DIPLOMATIC TRACK WITH OTHER STATES IN THAT AREA IN AN EFFORT TO TRY TO GET NEGOTIATIONS STARTED.

3. Q. COULD YOU TELL US WHEN THE ETHIOPIAN GOVERNMENT WAS INFORMED ABOUT THIS AMMUNITION SALE?

A. LAST WEEK.

Q. COULD YOU MAKE IT MORE PRECISE?

A. I DON'T HAVE THE PRECISE DATE ON IT, DAVID.

Q. DO YOU KNOW WHAT --

Q. TO GO A LITTLE FURTHER ON THAT, COULD YOU TELL US IN WHAT AREA WE'RE WORKING TO HELP GET NEGOTIATIONS STARTED? IS THAT JOE SISCO, AND IS THAT WITH THE SUDANESE GOVERNMENT AS A MEDIATOR?

A. I REALLY CAN'T GO INTO THE DETAILS OF THOSE EFFORTS, DAVID.

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Q. WHAT WAS THE ETHIOPIAN REQUEST?

A. YOU MEAN THE AMOUNT?

Q. YES.

A. WE NEVER INDICATED WHAT THE VALUE OF THAT AMOUNT

WAS.

Q. BUT YOU ARE SAYING HERE THAT YOU DON'T WANT TO BE TOTALLY UNRESPONSIVE TO THIS. IS THE INFERENCE CORRECT THAT THIS MEANS THAT THEY ASKED FOR MUCH MORE, AND YOU ARE A LITTLE BIT RESPONSIVE BY GIVING THEM SEVEN?

A. ON BACKGROUND, I WOULDN'T USE "MUCH MORE," ----- THAT THEY ASKED FOR MUCH MORE BUT THE VALUE OF THE ORIGINAL REQUEST WAS CERTAINLY MORE THAN 7 MILLION DOLS.

Q. WOULD YOU AGREE THAT THEY ASKED FOR FOUR AND A-HALF TIMES MORE THAN THE SEVEN?

A. I'M NOT GOING TO COMMENT ON ANY COMPUTATIONS ON YOUR PART.

Q. BOB, IN THIS ETHIOPIAN STATEMENT YOU SAY, "THE UNITED STATES HAS BEEN VIRTUALLY THE SOLE SUPPLIER OF

ETHIOPIA'S MILITARY NEEDS FOR OVER TWENTY-YEARS, AND, THEREFORE, IT CANNOT BE TOTALLY UNRESPONSIVE." IS IT THE STATE DEPARTMENT POSITION THAT REGARDLESS OF WHAT REGIME RULES A COUNTRY THAT WE CONTINUE TO BE THE SUPPLIER OF SUCH SUPPLIES?

A. IN GENERAL TERMS, NO, IF YOU ARE SPEAKING GENERALLY OR HYPOTHETICALLY OR THEORETICALLY. BUT IN THE CASE OF ETHIOPIA WE HAVE HAD THIS LONG AND CONTINUING RELATIONSHIP WITH ETHIOPIA, NOT ONLY IN MILITARY SALES BUT IN ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE AS WELL.

Q. COULD YOU INDICATE WHAT INDICATIONS OF PROGRESS THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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UNITED STATES HAS RECEIVED TOWARD MEANINGFUL NEGOTIATIONS?

A. I CAN'T GO INTO DETAILS, DAVID, BUT IT'S BASED ON OUR OWN CONTACTS AND OUR OWN INFORMATION AND CLOSE CONSULTATION WITH THE ETHIOPIAN AUTHORITIES. ROBINSON UNQUOTE KISSINGER UNQUOTE

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